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The Relationship between Parish Pastor and Diocesan Social Agency as Seen in Social Work Literature

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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARISH PASTOR AND
DIOCESAN SOCIAL AGENCY AS SEEN IN
SOCIAL WORK LITERATURE**

by

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Maryknoll Sister**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Social Work
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Social Work**

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain what has been said in the literature of Catholic Social Work regarding the pastor and his relationship to social work.

Scope

The literature used as the source in this thesis is limited to twenty-one years of Catholic Social Work literature from 1931 through 1951. The parish pastor is considered the person responsible for everything within his parish, the curate as such having no authority within the parish except as has been delegated to him by the pastor. Therefore, in this thesis, the pastor is considered the head of the parish itself, of the school, of the activities within the parish, and of the interacting factors which make the entity called "the parish." All that has been said in social work literature during these years regarding the pastor under these headings falls within the scope of this thesis.

Method

A complete survey of the literature was made by three students and a card index compiled. On each card the title, author and source were written for each article. From the title or sub-title or (if the content was still obscure) from a cursory perusal, the subject matter covered in each article was indicated on each card. When the survey was completed, these cards were separated according to subject matter and a tentative list of possible subjects was compiled on which sufficient matter could be found for a thesis.

Each article which refers to the parish and the pastor has been read carefully. Either a summary of the article was made or copious quotations were copied. If the statements were general in nature, a summary was used; if the statements seemed of greater importance and more pertinent to special aspects of the thesis, the direct quotation was taken either to be used verbatim or to be paraphrased and incorporated into the written thesis. This system was modified somewhat, after more than half the material was gathered, and a running single word commentary was made and necessary references noted in lieu of the longer summary.

Articles referring to the parish census were included in the original classification. One or two of these were summarized, but it was then realized that they did not refer directly to the pastor's relationship to social work but were "only a system for the formulation of a plan which must be followed by action to

remedy the situation presented."¹ However, the remaining articles on census taking in the parish were read in case they should contain some pertinent matter, although they were not summarized. Although the work of various orders of Sisters in the parishes was described in the literature, these articles were read only if some professional social work training or casework emphasis was indicated. Some articles were so entitled as to indicate use of social work in the Church, but since they referred to the Church generally and not to the parish as an individual unit within the framework of the Church, they were not used.

As each article was finished, the card was checked to indicate that this material had been used.

Such a method of note-taking, covering a twenty-one year span, resulted in fifty pages of notes. These notes were reread as a whole to give a full picture of the material gathered, and sub-titles were jotted down as they came into notice under each different general heading to which they pertained. With a small amount of revision these sub-titles became the Table of Contents of this thesis.

1 Mother Teresa Tallon, "Systematic Study of Parish Conditions," Proceedings of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, Washington, D.C., 1934, 214 in Discussion by Dr. Moore. NOTE Hereafter, the publication Proceedings of the National Conference of Catholic Charities will be referred to as National Proceedings.

Sources

The sources used in this thesis were, primarily, Catholic Charities Review and Proceedings of the National Conference of Catholic Charities as issued between 1931 and 1951 inclusive. Another periodical, The Priest, was surveyed in its entirety, the first volume being published in 1944. Other periodicals were examined by means of the periodical index, but contained little literature pertaining to the parish or the pastor. Literature in pamphlet or book form was surveyed and those used are indicated in the footnotes.

Significance

The significance of this thesis is found in the similarity between the family and the parish and the importance which Catholic Social Work leaders concede to this similarity.

Catholic Social Work has been organized in this country for several decades. The official recording of thought in this field began as far back as 1910 so that Catholic Social Work has had at least forty years of growth under guidance of the Church leaders. During these years, besides the national conferences held annually, there has also been an increase in the number of schools of social work under Catholic auspices. It would seem, therefore, that these two agencies would be the two main channels for the recording of the official Catholic thought on social work, and that if the literature studied is written under their patronage or, in the case of published books printed under an Imprimatur,

it would constitute the main trend of thought of the Church in America regarding social work. On the other hand, if these leaders of Catholic Social Work do not cover in their writings certain aspects of the field, it seems reasonable to assume that these omitted facets are considered of little importance in the moulding of Catholic thought on social work.

In the family we find the basis for society; it is there we find birth, growth, and the fulness of social living and the necessary stepping stone for the higher, more complicated forms of society. The Catholic Church has followed this basic unit of family living in her administration and has established, as far as possible, small units called the parish in order to ensure the closer cooperation between the people and the Church. In the parish we find the birth of spiritual life in Baptism and its growth through the Sacraments. Generally speaking, a Catholic grows in spiritual life as a member of the Church through his parish and the ministrations of his pastor who has been placed over him. "His life as a Catholic begins in the parish, runs its normal course within a parish, and is achieved within the parish."² A Catholic is not free to choose his own parish but belongs to the one where he resides and, as in a family, has the right to expect paternal

² Most Rev. Aloisius J. Muench, "Catholic Charities and Parochial Life," National Proceedings, 1936.

care from the head of the parochial family.³ Regarding his relationship with his pastor, Fr. Gill says, "The position and function of the parish priest represent the potential mobilization of the whole immeasurably dynamic strength of religion in the life of the Catholic."⁴

This factor of religious affiliation with a definite Church would have small importance for most people outside the Catholic Faith although a sense of spiritual or religious development is generally considered a necessary factor in the fully integrated personality.⁵ But, regarding a Catholic, it should be borne in mind that failure to be united to his Church causes guilt, conflict, and confusion manifesting itself particularly in social maladjustment. Fr. Gill states that a realization of this religious factor is necessary for good casework therapy in understanding the attitude of the client towards guilt and that the parish priest should be part of the treatment.⁶

3 Ecclesiastical Law, Canon 467.

4 Rev. Thomas Gill, "Religion and Social Work," Catholic Charities Review, XXXI, Oct., 1947.

NOTE Hereafter, the periodical Catholic Charities Review will be referred to as Charities Review.

5 Edward A. Strecker, Basic Psychiatry, New York, 1952, 355 and 364; Karl A. Menninger, The Human Mind, New York, 1951, 473n.

6 Gill, "Religion and Social Work," Charities Review, XXXI.

The significance of this thesis is to show how much or how little the leaders of Catholic Social Work realize the importance of the pastor as a unit of resource and how they have manifested the realization of his importance in their interpretation of the pastor's function as head of the parish and the interrelationship between the pastor and social work. Do these leaders link the small group of the parish as necessary for personality integration with fundamental security as seen in the family in a physical way? Do they see the importance of the parish and the personal interest of the pastor to the individual in need of social services? Or do they, by a paucity of references to it, indicate a relative disregard for it as having no particular benefit in social work?

Related Literature

Aside from the articles and passages of books used in this thesis, there is little related literature on this phase of social work. The related literature used in this thesis refers to parochial administration and psychiatry. Penal Administrative Procedure Against Negligent Pastors by Carl A. Meier and Revolution in a City Parish by Abbe Michonneau relate to work in the parish; The Human Mind by Karl Menninger and Basic Psychiatry by Edward A. Strecher relate to psychiatry and personality development.

The social work literature is written from the viewpoint of the agency and what few parish priests are represented in the literature are also connected with the central diocesan

bureau. It is regretted that we do not have any indications in the literature concerning what an equal number of parish priests feel regarding social work.

Ultimate Goal: Salvation of Souls

The fact that a conflict exists between the parish pastor and organized social work must be admitted although both have as the ultimate purpose of their work the salvation of souls. Theoretically, the agency recognizes that a division of labor is necessary in this important work because of the complicated nature of modern living. However, from the viewpoint of the parish priest, only one instance is found in which this division of labor is recognized and valued by him--and this priest is also an associate director of the central bureau.

Every organization under the auspices of the Catholic Church exists for one purpose, to know and to practice the Christian way of life. Every department under Catholic leadership is bent on helping the individual soul. The Church preaches the Gospel and administers the Sacraments of Christ. The school takes over religious and secular teaching. The hospital cares for the sick. The social agency works with individuals and families, helping them to meet the vicissitudes of life. A guidance clinic assists emotionally disturbed persons. Blessed is the pastor or Sister Principal who can refer a child to a Catholic agency for physical or mental illness, emotional quirks, or home needs.

Structure of This Thesis

In this thesis the position of the pastor, the extent of his authority, the resources over which he has control, the per-

sonal influence he has on his people, the function of the agency, the relationship between the pastor and the agency, all, as seen in the literature, along with probable causes and possible solutions, are discussed in an attempt to indicate clearly the arguments on both sides of the conflict between the parish pastor and the agency.

In the second chapter, the pastor and his obligations and his relationship with his parishoners are treated. Exactly what is his domain and how responsible he is has been stated in Canon Law. In the literature of this period under study there is found an interpretation of the pastor's place in regard to his flock and also a growing concern that the pastor is handing over to others the role of moral guidance which should be an essential part of the pastor's work. These points are covered in the second chapter in order to make clear the position of the pastor as discussed in this thesis: his position, his duties, his rights.

In the third chapter, the pastor is seen in his practical aspects as head of parish activities, in contrast to his official position as pastor with responsibility for souls as seen in Chapter Two. As head of the parish itself, he could be, and often is, the director of an autonomous social agency; as head of the school he should concern himself not only with the educational needs of the child, but also with his social and emotional needs for future maturity; as head of the St. Vincent de Paul Society he could, with proper training of the Vincentians, more than outdo

the work of the central bureau in the strengthening of family life; as head of parish clubs and recreational facilities he has many resources, useful and necessary in crime prevention and rehabilitation. These points are mentioned in this chapter, although only superficially discussed, in order to indicate the importance of the resources which the pastor has and which should be realized by the agency.

In the fourth chapter the various points of the conflict between the parish pastor and the central agency are discussed. Why was the agency founded? What is Catholic Social Work? Why is it needed? The pivots of the conflict seem to be the lack of understanding by the parish priest, the failure of the agency to interpret its program, the failure of the agency to take the pastor into consultation in decisions regarding parishoners, and the hostility of the pastor to the immaturity and over-professionalism of the agency worker. This chapter is the focal point of the thesis.

In the fifth chapter, the findings of this study are summarized.

It should be made clear that this thesis is based on literary sources only and that the criticisms which are found herein are those as found in the literature. As mentioned before, the literature is, unfortunately, one-sided and the defense of the parish priest for his attitudes is not obtainable.

CHAPTER II

THE PARISH PRIEST, PASTOR OF SOULS

Responsibility of the Pastor

In the literature studied, which included statements of the hierarchy of the Church, the leaders in social work thought, and the pastors themselves, nowhere is it found that the pastor is responsible only for the normal, self-sustaining soul, while the responsibility for the confused and emotionally disturbed soul lies with the diocesan director of Catholic Charities. The pastor is in charge of all souls within the confines of his parish and the Diocesan Bureau is only an aid, a helping hand, for him in his work.

From the very nature of the parochial office, and from the position of being placed in charge of souls for their eternal welfare, the pastor has certain definite and grave obligations. He is a priest responsible to God for the exercise of his prerogative in the interests of a definite group of Christians, to aid them in discharging their spiritual obligations. Men are bound to acknowledge God as their supreme Lord and first beginning, and to strive toward Him as their last end. They have always felt the need in rendering this service, of a priesthood . . . the Christian priest . . . His office is not for human beings and things that pass away, however lofty and valuable those may seem, but for the things divine and enduring, according to the plan of the Redemption of the human race.¹

¹ Carl Anthony Meier, Penal Administrative Procedure Against Negligent Pastors, Washington, D.C., 1941, 1. (Paraphrase of Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius IX on the Catholic Priesthood)

Canon Law and the Parish Pastor

Canon Law is very definite on the duties of the pastor--that he, and he alone, is responsible for the souls of all within his particular territory, subject to the direction of his bishop. It is also clear in Canon Law that the relationship between the pastor and his parishoners is a personal one and that besides administering the Sacraments of the Church, he is also under obligation to get to know his people.

A resume of the Canons of Church Law dealing with the parish and the pastor's relationship with his people, shows the importance with which the Church regards the small group and the personal interest of the pastor. Each diocese throughout the world is to be divided into territorial sections making for small group living, each division having its own proper church to which the Catholic population of the district shall be assigned. Over this district or parish a local pastor shall be placed who shall take the necessary care of souls² and who shall have a personal relationship with his people.

Each pastor is placed over a determined part of the flock of Christ in the respective dioceses, and is bound in conscience to concern himself with the spiritual and temporal welfare of this charge. (The salvation of the people is the supreme law, and the ministration of the parish was instituted in the Church, not for the convenience of him to whom it is committed, but for the salvation of those on whose behalf it is conferred.)³

2 Ecclesiastical Law, Canon 216

3 Sentence in original source written in Latin.

This obligation is grave and arises in justice when he assumes the responsibility of exercising the care of souls in his parish with the express or implied promise to carry out conscientiously all the obligations attached thereto.⁴

Canon 415 states that the pastor is an individual priest or "moral person" (such as an institute or religious order or college) to whom a parish is entrusted with the care of souls. This same Canon stresses the mind of the Church on the personal relationship which should exist between the pastor and the people by stating that a personal officer of said institute or religious order should be the pastor. The personal character of a pastor's duties requires his personal presence in the parish, and despite ill health, old age, epidemic or war, he must continue to live in his parish unless express release has been given him by his bishop.⁵ He must live near his church, he must have the permission of his bishop to be absent from his parish even for one week, and in that absence he must provide a substitute who will care for his people.⁶ He is the pastor of his flock and Canon 466 adds a further personal touch to the relationship in a spiritual way, and makes it of obligation that he offer Mass for his people on all Sundays, all holy days of obligation and all abolished holy days which latter include most of the great feast days of the year.

4 Meier, Penal Procedure, 3.

5 Ibid, 31.

6 Ecclesiastical Law, Canon 465.

There is another quality regarding the pastor found in Canon Law which might well explain his hostility to the taking over of his work by the agency, when this is not fully understood by him. "The pastor assumes the care of souls in his parish from the moment of taking possession of the parish."⁷ "The pastor is by virtue of his office, obliged to exercise the care of souls toward all his parishoners . . ."⁸ and through all these statements of canonical obligation runs the quality of permanence. Although he may be removed under certain circumstances the pastor is permanent in the canonical sense which quality gives stability to the entire framework of the parish and which quality could well be used in casework therapy in bringing a client to the realization that he is an intergral part of his parish.

Thus, it has been the constant mind of the Church that those pastors to whom the care of souls has been entrusted be irremovable in their office. Especially since the time of the Decretals Sept. 5, 1234 it has manifested this desire repeatedly and in the Council of Trent 1545-1563 the preceding legislation was confirmed.⁹

Irremovability is the privilege which demands that, once a pastor has been placed in his parochial benefice to which the care of souls has been attached, he cannot be removed from or deprived of this benefice except for grave reasons stated expressly in the law, and through a strictly judicial process.¹⁰

7 Ibid, Canon 461.

8 Ibid, Canon 464.

9 Meier, Penal Procedure, 8.

10 Ibid, 50.

According to the mind of the Fathers of the Council of Trent, pastors having the care of souls were to be established permanently in their parishes, so as to be better able to fulfill effectively the duties incumbent upon them. Each parish was to have its own particular and permanent rector or pastor.¹¹

The permanence of the office of the pastor is a desirable factor in casework. A successful use of such a factor by an agency worker--even though it might be only an interpretation to the client of belonging to something so stable, could bolster the client's sense of security.

In regard to the other factor under discussion, viz., the personal relationship, the Church emphasizes its importance in a positive way in Canon 467:

Pastors must administer the Sacraments to the faithful as often as they legitimately request it, get acquainted with the people, admonish the erring, assist the poor and the sick and give special care to the instruction of the children in the Catholic Faith.

The items in Canon Law which pertain to the pastor indicate the solicitous mind of Mother Church in her care of her children and the magnificence of a resource which is not fully used in casework therapy.

The mind of the Church is that the parish, a small unit of its vast organization be a stable entity, under the direction of a pastor who is under obligation to act with paternal love for the spiritual and the temporal welfare of his flock. Since the

¹¹ Ibid, 50.

parish is formed for the people, a grave neglect of this paternal care is considered one of the several causes which might result in the removal of the pastor.

If the pastor was gravely negligent in his parochial duties, he could be deprived of his parish. The Church does not wish, but rather abhors, arbitrary removal. The parochial office, by its very nature, should be as permanent as the circumstances permit. For it is only with such stability in office that the parish priest can accomplish the greatest good for the souls entrusted to his care, . . . The bishop in removing such a priest from his office . . . was bound by the principles of natural equity to act only when there was a just and reasonable cause present.¹²

Pastor's Obligations Towards His People

In the literature which is being studied, many references are found regarding the place of the parish and the parish pastor in the life of the people.

The Church . . . has established an external and legal bond between priest and people, between a particular priest and the people of a specified territory. It has united one to the other by means of reciprocal rights and duties in an entity that is called a parish; and this de facto entity has an importance that is not only ecclesiastical but likewise civil and social. The parish priest is that moral person to whom is entrusted a parish. He has the obligation of the care of souls which is to be exercised under the authority of his bishop.

Would that the faithful of every parish could grasp the mind of the Church, be animated by her motives and carry out her magnificent program!¹³

One segment of the Church's program uniting priest and people is the care of the poor and the sick which is a most im-

12 Ibid, 50-51.

13 Most Rev. Amleto Cicognani, "Parish Charity," National Proceedings, 1934, 9-16.

portant factor in the care of souls. Bishop Muench states that all ministrations, activities and works that have a bearing on the main business of the Church find their chief center in parish life. "Among them, charitable works on behalf of the poor must receive an important place."¹⁴ This concept regarding the work of the Church carries with it the obligation of recognizing it as a parish obligation. It is not one that should be passed on to someone else. "Without such recognition it is useless to talk of parish organization in the field of Catholic Charities."¹⁵

Rev. Francis Curtin stresses the obligation of the parish priest in the field of family counseling. He compares the guidance needed by the family in straightening out marital difficulties to the guidance needed in the spiritual life--there can be no progress in spiritual life without placing oneself under the guidance of a counselor with whom one might discuss one's difficulties.

It must be recognized that the primary responsibility for the solution of family problems rests with the parish priest by virtue of his priesthood, and his appointment by the bishop for the direction of souls.¹⁶

In line with this role of the pastor as moral guide, Rev. Thomas Verner Moore fears that the pastors are letting this essen-

¹⁴ Muench, "Parochial Life," National Proceedings, 1936.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Rev. Francis W. Curtin, "The Priest and Family Counseling," National Proceedings, 1948.

tial detail of their work pass into alien hands. In a plea for the recognition of psychiatry enriched by strong, Catholic principles, and the establishment of mental hygiene clinics under Catholic auspices, Dr. Moore referring to moral guidance by the clergy, says, "That it will entirely pass from the Catholic priesthood is incompatible with our belief that the Church is the pillar and ground of truth and will endure to the end of time."¹⁷ But it is passing, for the clergy are sending children to clinics and ". . . does this not imply that pastors and curates are unable to handle problems of delinquency?"

Are we going to allow the education of our clergy to prepare the way for a condition of affairs in which they will baptize the new-born and bury the dead; but the practical problems of moral guidance will be referred to the neuro-psychiatrist?¹⁸

The psychiatrists in the mental hygiene clinics are taking over the moral guidance of the community and the tone of guidance depends on the one in charge. Too often, it is anti-religious or, at least, lacks all training in theology.¹⁹

On such a matter as the moral guidance of childhood, the Church must advocate not merely conditions that will sometimes and in some places direct the child according to the principles of sound morality, but rather aim towards a state of affairs that will as far as possible always and everywhere guarantee the moral protection of youth.²⁰

17 Rev. Thomas Verner Moore, "Mental Hygiene and the Pastoral Ministry," National Proceedings, 1931.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

The Privileges of the Pastor's Position

Such statements of leaders in Catholic thought cover the obligations of the parish pastor in his work with souls: his care of the poor and sick, the position of counselor in marital difficulties, his essential duty to guide the young in faith and morals. Because of this unique, authoritative position and the obligations placed upon him, there is found a corresponding set of privileges which places him in an incomparably advantageous position from the viewpoint of social casework treatment. Rev. Thomas Gill states that the pastor holds the key position and this should be recognized by the agency and the worker who are trained in the best use of resource even though the pastor himself might not make the full use of these advantages. He is in the unique position to bring about the necessary disposition on the part of an individual or family to seek aid from a social agency. As the father of the family, he has the love and interest of his people at heart and the authority to take the first step and leadership in starting some action on their problems. It is not only a privilege but also an obligation. He is, often, the only one who can bring things into a proper focus.

The priest's position in his community places him in a singularly advantageous situation to facilitate referral. It must be remembered, first, that he lives in the neighborhood. There is a certain permanence in his residence there. Furthermore, the association he has with his people is characterized by a unique familiarity. They tell him comparatively easily their own personal problems, such as physical ailments, and handicaps, emotional stresses, anxieties, fears, disappointments, failures, guilt and sorrow. ~~They have recourse to him~~

with their family troubles, including marital difficulties, misunderstandings, conflicts, economic strains, social tensions, even their offenses and delinquencies. All this they confide to him in his capacity of counselor, quite distinct from his function as a confessor. It is a truism in Catholic life that the parish priest's parlor is a sanctuary for trouble-burdened clients of every variety--the aged, the young, men and women, single and married. They come for advice not only for themselves but for husband, wife, child, parent, other relatives, friends, neighbors. The more delicate the nature of the difficulty, the more likely is it that the priest will be the one to whom the troubled parishoner goes for counsel.

All this imposes a grave responsibility on the pastor. He has such an unusual opportunity for picking up family problems. Precisely to the measure of that opportunity corresponds the gravity of his obligation. He is a sentry of the community. By virtue of his position he must be alert to the symptoms that threaten the individual or social welfare.²¹

Because of his intimate acquaintance with the people of his community, the priest has an excellent entree to most sources of information as well as a skilled insight into the spiritual components of the parishoners' strengths and weaknesses.²² The parish priest should be an integral part of casework treatment because he is so closely linked in the parishoner's mind with "eternal social adjustment" which facet of the Christian conscience or psychiatric super-ego, or whatever term we wish to give it, cannot be overlooked in good casework with a Catholic client. For a Catholic, in or out of the Church, his pastor is a tangible link with the ultimate goal of eternal life in heaven and the proximate obstacle of sin and guilt or even neurotic feeling of guilt.

²¹ Rev. Thomas Gill, "Religion and Social Work," Charities Review, XXXI, Oct., 1947, 206.

²² Ibid.

Not only does the religious factor constitute an important item in understanding the client's attitudes, but it is directly, often deeply, involved in securing changes, improvement or strengthening of attitudes. Here, the parish priest enters the scene not only because, as a natural confidante of the family, he is often aware of their attitudes, but because as their spiritual counselor he has access to some of the mainsprings of those attitudes. He knows something, in other words, of the origin as well as the development of some of the deepest emotional forces which influence the lives of his families. It is an added advantage that he knows this through a viewpoint identified with their own. He has at hand tools of interpretation of the social and personal difficulties toward which unsatisfactory emotional states may be leading the client. His people are frequently well disposed to accept that interpretation from him because they know he is not going to confuse them further by compromising their long-range interests with ephemeral, opportunistic goals of temporal value. These cultural, spiritual bonds between priest and parishoners represent a key frequently capable of unlocking a stubborn barrier to the efficacious service of the social worker and psychiatrist, or more, of introducing, supporting and sustaining their treatment.²³

It is at this point of the relationship between pastor and parishoner that the comparison between the family and the parish may be seen. It is the innate sense of belonging to something and somebody which is so necessary for a well adjusted, happy human being which gives strength to the bonds between parishoner and pastor. In the mind of the parishoner he thinks, "My parish, my Church, my pastor," and even the more personal intimacy of "my confessor to whom I tell my sins." If the concepts of modern psychiatry are valid, i.e., that love and guidance and discipline and a home in which one feels "at home" are necessary for future integration and maturity of personality, then, the position of the

parish and the pastor cannot be over-emphasized as the tangible agent of Mother Church in her solicitude for the children of God. A parishoner is always a child in the pastor's estimation and outgrows the parish only in death as he passes into eternal maturity.

Summary of Chapter

The permanent position of the pastor and his obligations to care for his people, both as emphasized in Canon Law and as indicated in the literature, have been pointed out. Because of the grave obligations placed on him, there are concurrent privileges enjoyed by him in his relation to his people. His position is that of a father, someone to whom his people can turn; he is one who knows their strengths and weaknesses; he has the entree to sources of information which no one else possesses. Agency workers might well realize the great advantage in working closely with such a resource who could give them much help in their own case-work therapy, as well as the great advantage to the clients by the strenthening of the bonds between them and their pastor.

CHAPTER III

THE PASTOR AS HEAD OF THE PARISH ACTIVITIES

The parish in itself is an autonomous social agency.

For centuries Charity was done in the Church through the parish priests.

They received the applications for assistance, they made the investigations, they contacted the necessary agencies and institutions, they provided homes for their children, they adjusted the knotty situations and problems, and finally passed judgment on their ultimate disposition.¹

The authority for its work in the social welfare field is found in Canon Law. In studying the literature, we find illustrations of several phrases from the Canons. We find the parish fulfilling the command "to become acquainted with the people" in its social action program, "to assist the poor" by supporting low-rent housing, "to guard the faith and morals of the young" in the parish school and in its recreational program, and "to advance the works of Charity" in its St. Vincent de Paul program.

The Parish Pastor and Social Action

In the story of parishes throughout the United States,

¹ Rev. John J. Kelley, "What Can the Worker Expect from the Parish Priest?" National Proceedings, 1933, 25.

many instances are found where the personal interest and clear-sighted leadership of the pastors have initiated a wide program which has resulted in the better welfare of the parish and the entire community. A particular example of this is an account of the collaboration between the pastors and the civic council of the "Back of the Yards" district in Chicago. Rev. Edward Plawinski quoting a statement of the Council in 1939 says

Therefore, we the people of Back of the Yards, believe that if anybody is going to solve our problems, we the people will do it ourselves . . . Could anyone be more interested about children getting into trouble than their mothers? Than the priests of the Church to which these children belong? We know that we feel about our own problems with our heart and not just with our head. Furthermore, we the common people of Back of the Yards with our own natural leaders, our own priests, our labor leaders . . . know that we have as much intelligence and as much leadership ability as any outsider.²

This civic council feels that because of the cooperation it received from the pastors of the district, the people have been enabled to start a new life of social well being for themselves and their children. Because of the interest shown by the parish priests in their economic problems, they feel that they are in a better position to appreciate the priceless treasures of their religion. " . . . that the great body of Faith and morals which is the Church really is the driving force and guide for all their activities in every walk of life."

The Catholic Churches of the area stood solid behind the CIO.

² Rev. Edward E. Plawinski, "The Parish and the Leadership in Community Civic Programs," National Proceedings, 1944.

Priests of Back of the Yards took to the radio, to the lecture hall, and to the street corner in their support of the CIO. The morale of the people reached a pitch never seen before in the community. The collapse of the open shop in the packing industry made the people in Back of the Yards realize the tremendous strength inherent in an organization designed and generated by power of grass roots democracy.³

Another phase of parish and civic welfare in which the pastor has great potential leadership is that of low-rent housing. Msgr. O'Grady states that even though the modern super-highway, involving demolition of the homes of many parishoners and the erection of housing projects, causes necessary shifting of the population, there should be no fundamental conflict between the interests of the Church and those who are concerned with housing and city planning." Such situations should not necessarily interfere with family or parish life.⁴

There is a trend towards objection to low-rent projects and the parish pastor could do much in interpreting the need to his parishoners.

Public low-rent housing is designed to provide a certain standard of housing for people who cannot afford to pay for it. It is designed to improve their standard of life. It is a means of guaranteeing one of the essentials of a decent livelihood. We cannot have any decent standards of life without certain essentials in food, clothing, and shelter. We cannot have decent family life without these standards.⁵

3 Ibid.

4 Rt. Rev. Msgr. John O'Grady, "The Priest and Housing," National Proceedings, 1949.

5 Rev. Edward Swanstrom, "The Catholic Parish and Low Rent Housing," National Proceedings, 1944.

Social action in a parish could take every moment of the pastor's time. In his care of souls and the corresponding care of bodies calling for both the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, the parish priest comes in contact with all the social problems of the parish. Rev. John Cronin says that the social problem of the parish is deeply concerned with despair in the parishoner. It is the "despair of the slums breeding disease, vice, ignorance and crime; it is the despair of the jobless father; it is injustice in all its forms" from the swindling stock broker down to the tyrannizing minor foreman, back again to the oppressing government.⁶

Just as the young in their formative years are likely to fall a prey to legal delinquencies, so too, are the so-called under-privileged, the poor and the unfortunate. Poverty is as truly the mother of crime as it may be the mother of virtue.⁷

The Popes have called for the reign of Christ among men and call to the pastors that they go to the working-man and not wait for him to come to the priest. The working man is timid and feels his lack of education in the presence of the priest. His interests center around his work and it is balm to his soul to have someone who is not a working-man who will listen to his problems.⁸

⁶ Rev. John F. Cronin, "Social Action in the Parish," The Priest, I, January, 1945, 18.

⁷ Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. Mellon, "Community Program for Crime Prevention - Through the Church," National Proceedings, 1931.

⁸ Cronin, "Social Action in the Parish," The Priest, I, 18.

The ideal of pastoral leadership is seen in practice in such situations as the Back of the Yards movement; it is seen in theory in the encyclicals of the Popes. Another aspect of the situation is seen in the words of Rev. John Cronin,

We must be frank about this; priests who are working in the social action field find as their greatest obstacle the fact that they cannot gain access to the working man through their fellow parish priests.

He pleads with them to walk through their parish, get to know their people, learn where they work. In an attempt to secure the names of fifty workers in an industrial plant whom he might contact for social action work, the pastors could supply only three names in a community in which over 10,000 Catholics were employed in that particular industrial plant.⁹

The Parish School

When considered as head of the parish school, the pastor has under his control an almost limitless resource for the training of integrated and mature personalities. It is, perhaps, a resource in itself and would require a separate study to do it justice. It is being mentioned here, in order to give a complete picture of the parish entity in relation to social work, but will be considered only in its role of crime prevention. William Grady, of the New York City school system, states that besides the eternity-focused goal, the Catholic school system has as its im-

9 Cronin, Ibid.

mediate goal the training of individuals so as to enable them to live a fuller, more useful life as an American citizen, thus helping the general welfare of the community.

The center of gravity has shifted from the text-book to the child, a soul being fashioned for eternity.

The school system has become more flexible and has been animated by a desire to adjust itself to the needs of the community; to work in cooperation with other agencies of the community; to develop citizens rather than scholars; to fashion lives that are not nicely shining bits of intellects but wholesome personalities who in terms of aptitudes and attitudes towards our fellow man, our Church and our God will enable us to realize the American ideals of competency, helpfulness and loyalty such as are basic not merely to the success of the individual but to the general welfare of our community and our national life¹⁰

Catholic teaching never ceases to instil into the souls of Catholic school pupils the doctrine that human conduct is intrinsically connected with rewards and penalties stretching beyond time into eternity; it endeavors always to correlate secular subjects and Christian Doctrine and stresses the importance of morals in human relationships.

Our whole philosophy concerning the making of good citizens and the formation of sturdy, moral character in youth is based upon the conviction and the experiences that religious training is of the very essence of genuine education.¹¹

Monsignor Lawler states that it is an understatement to say that the Catholic schools are interested and engaged in the task of

¹⁰ William E. Grady, "The School as a Prevention and Reconditioning Agency," National Proceedings, 1933.

¹¹ Very Rev. Msgr. William F. Lawler, "Community Program for Crime Prevention - Through the School," National Proceedings, 1933.

prevention of crime.

The Catholic school delves far more deeply into the root of the matter than any civic community does or even dares to attempt. Communities, as a rule, are quite satisfied if their environs are conspicuously noted for the absence of publicly committed acts which, judged by the traditional standards of humanly enacted legislation, are labeled and accepted by the public as crime. The Catholic school, however, labors systematically not only in the field of crime prevention but in that wider sphere of sin elimination . . . Crime is impossible unless sin is embraced and virtue ignored. To induce youth to the love and practice of virtue on one hand and to the abhorrence and avoidance of sin on the other, constitutes the chief aim of Catholic educational endeavor.¹²

It would be impossible to present a full picture of the parish as a possible resource for casework treatment without mentioning the innumerable organizations and groups which are usually found in a parish. Foremost in importance are those groups which are, or could be, formed to give recreation to the youth of the parish.

Of prime importance are the activities concerned with our youth. Everyone, psychologist and theologian alike, will tell us that the most difficult and critical period in life is the period of adolescence.¹³

Msgr. Mellon claims that it is the duty of the pastor to provide for recreation for the adolescents and the young adults, i.e., for the teen-agers in his care, and unless it is provided in the parish they will seek it elsewhere. One of the outstanding characteristics of the teen-ager is his spirit of conformity. This is a

12 Ibid.

13 Mellon, "Community Program for Crime Prevention," National Proceedings, 1931.

startling statement to many, but it is reiterated by most writers of literature on the adolescent. They conform to the principles laid down by the flock and because of this tendency to "follow the herd," the pastor has his strongest chance to guide and direct the youth of his parish in his sodalities and clubs. It is a situation wherein the principles of group work could be used to the best advantage and this should be recognized by the agency worker who is trying to handle a problem adolescent and by the pastor in trying to guide the young people of his parish. The work with teen-agers should be in the form of a club, one which is run by themselves. They respond to the responsibility, and the priest, as an enabler, should keep his authority at the minimum although using all the devices known to group work to keep the club alive. But it is a golden opportunity which is often lost and many priests in charge of teen-age groups "betray a tragic inability to understand young people."

The teen-ager of today, let it be shouted from the housetops, is a strange mass of strange contradictions. Perhaps, indeed, the only ones more often muddled in this present hour of grace are the adults called upon to direct them. The boy or girl who has reached the difficult half-way house called adolescence is neither a child nor an adult . . . the care and feeding of the teen-ager calls for a technique all its own. One must strive to meet the teen-ager on his own level and according to his peculiarities. The chaplain who fails to plunge into this same spirit will soon watch his youth club fade away into that crowded Never-Never Land of defunct parish societies--none of which died without the priest.¹⁴

¹⁴ Donald Diddit, "Care and Feeding of the Teen-ager," The Priest, V, July, 1949. 496-502.

Father Diddit points out that other groups, many anti-Catholic, some simply a-Catholic, are laboring with more zeal and singleness of purpose to form the still plastic souls of the young in an attempt to capture the loyalty of our future adults.

No parish priest, whatever his personal taste or accumulated prejudices, has ever the right to neglect or discourage the healthy development of youth groups within the flock God has entrusted to him.¹⁵

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

The organization within the parish to which has been entrusted the carrying out of the family social work is the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The members are mature men of the parish, most of them family men and are called Vincentians. Although these men perform the actual work entailed in helping the poor, the Society is directly under the care of the pastor and depends on him for life and vigor.

The priest, indeed, would have neither the time nor the means to satisfy the varied demands made on him within his territorial jurisdiction, because above all things he must interest himself in spiritual matters. For this very reason the Church from the very beginning assigned to her deacons the performance of the works of Charity. They had to furnish a list of the poor and to make known the needs of each one; to give advice as to the prudent distribution of alms; to receive the indigent and to visit them in the bosom of their families. All this is precisely the work which Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are carrying on.¹⁶

15 Ibid.

16 Most Rev. Amleto Cicognani, "Parish Charity," National Proceedings, 1934, 12.

The Society is organized along parish lines and even in circumstances where a diocesan office of the Society dispenses funds to the needy, the funds are secured from the individual parishes in which the client resides. Besides the financial care of the poor, the Vincentians carry on a rehabilitation program, although usually along voluntary, unprofessional lines.

In addition to individual spiritual needs the Vincentians frequently have occasion to deal with those types of social defects which are based on lack of religious life. Included among these are the problems of irresponsibility of father toward his family, intemperance, abandonment, sex excess, domestic strife, neglect of children. These and the many other social problems which beset an agency frequently have their root in the neglecting of religious practices. Where the delinquent can be brought to a realization of these weaknesses and where it can be pointed out to him that a cure is largely possible through the utilization of religious help, the result can be frequently successful.¹⁷

Mr. Mulroy is convinced "that St. Vincent de Paul conferences organized under proper supervision, constitute a force of amazing power for the interpretation of the social mission of the Church."

Had the Society of St. Vincent de Paul followed the far-sighted advice of one of its leaders back in 1921, the need of diocesan offices would be questionable. Although the same leader speaking in 1950 does not evince the same interest in professional work for the Society, he continues to stress the need and the importance of the work of the Vincentians among families which are

¹⁷ Richard F. Mulroy, "The Helping Hand of St. Vincent de Paul," National Proceedings, 1931.

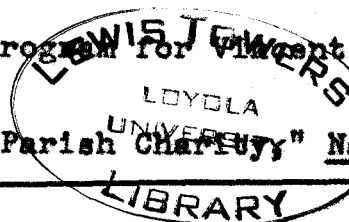
in trouble.¹⁸

Chapter Summary

The parish as an autonomous social agency has a very special place in social work. When looked at through national statistical reports, the social problems of the country can be overwhelming; when looked at from the pastor's viewpoint they are the poor, the sick, the delinquent boys and the troubled girls, many perhaps, but still, only those within certain territorial limits. The parish sets limits to the situation and makes the problem easier to handle. "No matter how the miseries of society may increase, we find that in a parish the number of the sick, of widows in need, or abandoned orphans, is limited."¹⁹ It is just because of these limits to numbers and problems within the parish confines that it has been necessary to erect facilities which might be necessary at times for a parish but not necessary often enough to justify exclusive use by one parish. In order to give the pastor this special help in handling particularly involved problems, the bishops of the dioceses have set up central bureaus whose services might be used by several or all the parishes as they are needed. The central bureau was founded for no other reason than to help the pastor in his ministry. The parish obliga-

¹⁸ James Fitzgerald, "Training Program for Vincentians," National Proceedings, 1950.

¹⁹ Most Rev. Amleto Cicognani, "Parish Charity," National Proceedings, 1934.



tion still remains to care for the needy which the parish is able to handle.

In this chapter the place of the pastor as head of parish activities has been discussed, which activities offer resources to social work in prevention and rehabilitation. The advantageous position the pastor holds in potential casework treatment and the advantage to the whole social work field of the resources found in a parish have been pointed out. When referring to these parish activities, the writers of social work literature do not state that these activities are good potential resources for social work except in the definite references to the incomparable position of the pastor. However, the possibilities of these various parish works found in scattered references throughout the literature, come into a definite focus when read as a whole. It has been indicated that some of the more complicated problems of social work have been removed from local parishes to a central bureau. This is done, not in an effort to remove either the work or the responsibility from the pastor but because of the lack of facilities and the expense involved for one particular parish to maintain such services.

CHAPTER IV

CONFLICT BETWEEN THE AGENCY AND THE PARISH PASTOR

Establishment of the Agency

Although a well-regulated parish can and often does carry out an excellent social welfare program, the establishment of a central bureau was inevitable. The causes are several and are found in the elements of our national life.

America is a land of immigrants. Every American possesses that strain in his personality which caused parents or grandparents to seek security away from home and all that home usually means. This mobility in regard to residence is characteristic of American life. In former times the entire family clan was engaged in helping parents rear a family. Now, a segment of a family moves off to distant places and there, among strangers, tries to rear the children without that physical and moral support only a family clan can give. This is considered by some writers as one of the major causes in the breakdown of family life.¹ Likewise, this constant shifting of residence has affected pastoral relation-

¹ Margaret Mead, "What is Happening to the American Family?" Journal of Social Casework, November, 1947.

ships, and the pastor, more than busy with the regular members of his parish, finds it impossible to make and maintain contact with the shifting element within his jurisdiction.² Another element in American life, possibly closely linked with change of residence and its resulting lack of stability, is the trend toward problematic behavior in the children, delinquent behavior in the youth, and maladjustment among the older members. In order to handle such a situation even superficially, a priest would need special training and much more time than is possible for him to have. Since the days of the depression, another shift has occurred in American life--the assuming by the government of the economic support of the under-privileged and the poor and the sick. These three factors, viz., the mobility of population, the increase in involved personality problems, and the centralization of financial assistance brought a change into the manner in which the Church would handle her Charity. It is easily seen that a parish pastor could not possibly be expected to cope with such a situation and still carry on the usual parish life for the normal, self-sustaining souls and those not in such unfortunate circumstances.

In answer to this challenge the Church began the establishment of what has become known today as "Organized Charity." With-sacrificing in the least degree, the great underlying principle and spirit of Christ-like Charity, the Church with her customary wise conservatism, fashioned and moulded her ancient methods into an efficient and scientific system. This new

2 Rev. John J. Kelley, "What Can the Worker Expect from the Parish Priest," National Proceedings, 1933.

system unified the multiple agencies of her charities and provided her with the necessary equipment to serve with a broader vision, with a greater efficiency, and with a better understanding the needs of her children, her poor and her unfortunate ones.³

This diocesan bureau has been set up as a help to the pastor, "a hand-maid to the parish," to which the pastor may turn for help "when trying to fathom the modern and complicated welfare problems of his people."⁴

With no intention of taking away from him any of his priestly duties toward the needy, the diocesan bureau offers to the individual pastor its greater resources, its larger equipment, its broader services that he may render to his flock a more complete and effective fulfilment of his sacred obligation.⁵

The need of such a central bureau in the diocese is recognized by the hierarchy of the Church not as something to be achieved but as something already organized and accepted. Most Rev. Amleto Cicognani says that the spirit which binds one to the parish, laudable in itself, should not cause anyone to ignore the movements of charity outside the parish. Such movements require greater facilities and afford greater opportunities which are not possible everywhere.

The pastors are grateful to the zealous promoters who in a spirit of sacrifice, going from place to place, offer their help in furthering a more fruitful and perfect parochial organization. Such movements, through the concerted action of promoters and pastors become a part of the very life of the parish, giving it a broader outlook and a clearer realization

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

of their value.⁶

Charity vs Social Work

Before discussing further the relationship between the pastor and the social agency, it might be well to investigate the fundamental concepts underlying the conflict. They may be summed up in the sub-title Charity vs Social Work.

In the study of the literature covered in this thesis, there is the recognition that a conflict exists among people engaged in social welfare activities regarding Charity and Social Work. There is no indication that any leaders recognize a conflict between the two concepts, but only a conflict within individuals themselves and this is found among parish priests, among students, and among agency workers who are untrained or who have the conflict as a carry-over from student days.

We still have to contend with a serious misunderstanding of our most fundamental concepts--on the one hand false concepts of Christian Charity; and on the other hand, false concepts of modern social service. False concepts of Christian Charity are all narrow, restricted interpretations far removed from the beautiful Catholic concept of God as Charity, Deus est Caritas. Charity is all too commonly conceived as an almsgiving in the very restricted sense of giving material relief to the poor Charity, as understood by many, stands for almsgiving, or at best, for the administration of material relief, and not for the dynamic spiritual force it is for St. Paul or St. Bernard.⁷

1934. 6 Cicognani, "Parish Charity," National Proceedings,

7 Sister Victoria Francis, "The Responsibility of the Religious for Interpretation of Social Work to Members of the Community," National Proceedings, 1937, 145.

In an address on social work education, Rev. John Harrington also recognizes this conflict without accepting it as valid.

There are some who feel that the very idea of a Catholic school of social work is an impossibility; that the concepts "Catholic" and "social work" do not mix. "Social work" is conceived as something new, pagan, and materialistic, whereas, the concept "Catholic" stands for something that is ageless, religious and spiritual. There would seem, furthermore, to be a basic conflict between both these concepts for one is said to emphasize humanitarian motives and the other is based on charity. One is rather stable and the other rather vague and indefinable. We all realize that only within the last few years has serious attention been given to an adequate definition of social work, whereas, the Catholic Church is quite well defined, clear and acceptable as an institution. Usually, the main conflict between the Catholic Church and modern social work is said to be in the concept of Charity.⁸

Charity is more than a motive for the doing of good; first and foremost, Charity is the Love of God, and, because of the essential simplicity of God, Charity is God Himself. In considering Charity and social work, it must be admitted that one is eternal and one is temporal; one is the goal and cannot be changed while the other is only a means to the goal and is still in the process of growth and change.

Father McKenney writing of the Natural Law which is the manifestation within each of us of God's Love and solicitude for us, says

The natural law, coming directly from God, is as unchangeable as God's nature. It is the same today as it was thousands of years ago, and it will be the same until the end of time. It is meant for all human beings without exception and is the

⁸ Rev. John M. Harrington, "Problems of Education in a Catholic School of Social Work," Caritas, Boston, Mass., X, Nov., 1950, 7.

same in all places, at all times, and for all people. Its principles never change, nor are there any exceptions to it.⁹

Whether one speaks of God Himself, or of His Love or His Law, that which is said of one may be predicated of the other. These words written regarding the Natural Law are just as eternally true of Charity, the Love of God. It is this spirit of Charity which gives life to, and is the motive of, social work.

When we consider social work in itself, we find that "modern social work is one of the ways that has been devised in this century of helping people to be their better selves."¹⁰ It makes no claim to immortality; it is simply a "method of assisting people on a purely natural plane."¹¹ It is a science possessing certain scientific validities which in themselves must be eternal since truth is eternal, but there is not universal acceptance of all of the recognized concepts in social work nor is there complete agreement upon which concepts are scientifically true.¹² It seems that therein lies the cause of the conflict--the lack of recognition that one is on a supernatural level and the other "on a purely natural plane." When this is accepted either by the parish priest who feels that the central diocesan bureau is removing

⁹ Rev. Charles R. McKenney, S.J., Moral Problems in Social Work, Milwaukee, 1951, 15.

¹⁰ Harrington, "Problems in Education," Caritas, X, 8.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Life and Love from its social work or by the student who wails, "Our teachers do not even seem to be Catholic; is there not a Catholic way of doing this?"¹³ then it will be seen that there is no real conflict between modern social work and Christian Charity.

When the young graduate of a school of social service recognizes St. Ignatius' conversion of St. Francis Xavier as a model of social case work procedure, and when the Religious recognizes in modern psychology and modern case work technique a way to prepare hearts to receive the grace of God--then we shall have solved our problem of interpretation.¹⁴

The fact must be recognized and accepted that social work is only a tool--a tool that is important and at times essential even for growth in a deeper relationship with God--but, nevertheless, only a tool.

Catholic Social Work

Catholic Social Work uses the techniques of the professional social work field but under the guidance of Catholic principles and philosophy. There is a basic standard in social work which should be accepted by all agencies.

Social work is a profession that aims at giving to every human being the opportunity to lead a normal life, to develop mentally, morally, and physically, so that ultimately the human race may be made up, in so far as possible, of self-supporting, self-reliant, healthy, happy individuals. In speaking of normal life, we are considering human beings and, therefore, we must consider human standards. And human standards presuppose several things,--proper food, decent cloth-

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Sister Victoria Francis, "Responsibility of the Religious," National Proceedings, 1937.

ing, suitable housing, a fair amount of education and an opportunity for needed recreation. These things at least are fundamental. For without them no human being can develop fully.¹⁵

Such a statement written by a bishop of the Church, should in no way cause conflict with the aims of non-Catholic agencies; such aims are basic, are fundamental. Some Catholic writers in the field of social work feel that modern social work is a renaissance of Charity within man.

Admitting that some trends in modern social work are contrary to Catholic principles and must be condemned by Catholics, the fact remains that in the main the whole current social work movement has been a rediscovery and a rebirth in a predominantly Protestant and individualistic civilization of the age-old concept of Christian Charity and social responsibility.¹⁶

Other writers feel that the underlying motives of Catholic and non-Catholic agencies are fundamentally different.¹⁷ However, it should be recognized that our motive and motif of social work is Christian Charity which is in the realm of Faith, and when we criticize others for the lack of it, it would be well to bear in mind that it is a fundamental teaching of the Church that Faith is a gratuitous gift from God. The aim of social work is to bring the client to a better social adjustment; the aim of religion is to

¹⁵ Most Rev. Charles LeBlond, "Address," National Proceedings, 1936, 22.

¹⁶ Sister Victoria Francis, "Responsibility of the Religious," National Proceedings, 1937.

¹⁷ Mary Elizabeth Walsh, Saints and Social Work, Silver Spring, Md., 1937.

bring the soul to eternal life in God. If Catholic social work cannot combine the two, then there is no longer a *raison d'être* for Catholic Social work; the non-Catholic agency, lacking Faith, must be judged only on its attainment of its particular goal,-- better social adjustment. The church works towards the ultimate goal of eternal life and uses as one of the means towards that goal social welfare services, both professional social work and various social services of its vast organization. Regarding social work by agencies with no religious affiliation, it is true to say that a better social adjustment might pave the way for God's Grace if no moral principles have been forfeited in the attaining of the social adjustment.

When considering Social Work as carried on by a Catholic agency there are some principles alligned with it which, if neglected, would be sufficient to have questioned the worker's right to the title "Catholic Social Worker."¹⁸ Father John Kelley says that every Catholic social worker must always be fully conscious of the sacredness of her responsibility. Her first consideration must be the safeguarding and building up of the religious life of the client under care.¹⁹ Sister Rosemary Markham speaks very

¹⁸ Sister Rosemary Markham, "Cooperative Relationships in Religious Counseling," National Proceedings, 1942, 67.

¹⁹ Kelley, "What Can the Worker Expect," National Proceedings, 1933.

clearly regarding the Catholic worker's responsibility. "It always remains her duty to assist the client in his total responsibility" and his spiritual life is the main part of it.²⁰ She has failed in her duty as a social worker if another element is given priority--such situations being taken individually, of course, and under consultation. The worker should orient her casework so as to keep in view the full dignity of the person, with this dignity greatly enhanced by his destiny for immortality.²¹

The worker should manage the relationship in such a way that the client will be made more conscious of the necessity of giving proper importance to the supernatural order in his life.

If we work toward gaining for the client the reality of only the emotional level, leave out of our treatment plan all endeavor to assist the client to become conscious of the reality of the supernatural order, then our claim of being Catholic social workers must be abandoned.²²

A Catholic social worker and Catholic agency must also exercise great care in her tactful handling of clients because of the close connection in the client's mind between the Catholic worker and the Church. Such caution is particularly incumbent on priests and nuns in social work.

The Catholic organization recognizing that the time and circumstances of the operation of the grace of God are unpredictable, should leave the way open for the spiritual recovery of the client and the rehabilitation of the home. Because it functions within the framework of the Church, the Catholic

20 Markham, "Cooperative Relationships," National Proceedings, 1942.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

agency must be careful that withdrawal of interest does not convey rejection which the client may interpret as the attitude of the Church.²³

The Ideal Relationship Between the Pastor and the Agency

As has been noted, the literature regarding the relationship between the pastor and the social work agency is written mainly by the priest or layman who is a social worker. The general attitude seems to be, theoretically at least, that the agency cannot do its complete work by itself. In fact, that since it has been founded to help the parish, a definite cooperation is desired and needed between the two.

Margaret Porter, writing from the viewpoint of the agency, refers to the parish priest as "Our First Public." She says

There must be basic assumptions both on his part and ours which are the sine qua non of a better and more useful relationship. On our part, we must assume the right of the parish priest to know and to understand what we do. This is the right of the whole community which supports us and uses us, but because of his close relationship, it is especially his On his part, the parish priest must be able to recognize that casework is a special, learned skill with special services to offer.²⁴

Monsignor O'Grady referring to this relationship between the priest and the agency says

One of the basic principles of Catholic Charities is to supplement the work of the pastoral ministry of the Church. The

²³ Margaret C. Norman, "Application of Catholic Philosophy of Social Case Work," National Proceedings, 1937, 69.

²⁴ Margaret Porter, "Our First Public--the Parish Priest," Charities Review, XXXIV, Feb., 1950, 32.

Catholic Charities office is supposed to deal with problems for which the ordinary priest does not have the time or the resources. Many of the problems arising between priests and Catholic Charities are matters for mutual consultation.²⁵

Rev. John Kelley refers to the diocesan bureau as an extension of the Church itself "designated to work under the guidance of the bishop and to work with and for the pastor toward the spiritual and physical betterment of his children."²⁶ Sister Rosemary Markham states that "the worker should be aware of her function as the liaison person between the client and the priest."²⁷ In the field of guidance the need of help from the priest is recognized and it is an admitted fact by social workers. Sister Rosemary states, "A social worker is not qualified to take on the task of religious counseling without the expert advice of a priest, anymore than she is qualified to carry on psychotherapy without the help of a psychiatrist."²⁸ "In situations where complex moral issues are involved," Father McKenney says, "there can never, of course, be an adequate substitute for personal conferences with a trained moralist."²⁹ Father Kelley feels that since the pastor is the respon-

²⁵ Rt. Rev. Msgr. John O'Grady, "The Parish and Its Social Problems," National Proceedings, 1950, 231.

²⁶ Kelley, "What Can Worker Expect," National Proceedings, 1933.

²⁷ Markham, "Cooperative Relationship," National Proceedings, 1942.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ McKenney, Moral Problems, 1.

sible one, he should be the one to turn to for help and advice and guidance.

With tact and respect and with an unpretentious display of knowledge and ability, she must consult him first in all her cases and solicit his cooperation. If she does this and wins his favor, then there is no measuring the assistance that he can give her.

Contact with the parish priest will continually keep the worker mindful that in her dealings with her children, she must never, for an instant, forget their spiritual nature and supernatural destiny . . . created by God for heaven as well as for a reasonable measure of earthly well-being and happiness.³⁰

Referring to this team work between the social worker and the parish priest, Father Bermingham says,

As they handle the social and emotional elements of these problems, they must be able to work cooperatively with the priest who has the responsibility of dealing with the moral and religious aspects of the situation.³¹

Father Kelley also refers to this relationship which should exist between the agency and the parish.

When the relationship of parish priest to bureau and bureau to parish priest is clearly understood, we can readily see that the whole-hearted cooperation of each is absolutely necessary if we would hope to attain the sublime and lofty object of our Church's charitable endeavor.³²

Sister Rosemary tersely states the underlying principle of this

³⁰ Kelley, "What Can the Worker Expect," National Proceedings, 1933.

³¹ Rev. Charles E. Bermingham, "These Social Workers," The Priest, IV, July, 1948, 930.

³² Kelley, "What Can the Worker Expect," National Proceedings, 1933.

relationship. "In practice, the social worker is supplementary to the priest, and the relationship between the two should reflect this characteristic."³³

Actual Relationship

Despite these numerous references to the existence of cooperation between the agency and the parish, the actual existence of it is not verified by the literature of the period under study. "Our clergy are ever a conservative crew," Father Kelley said in 1933, although he added that he felt that the days of misunderstanding were fading slowly away. By 1948, clerical writers were not quite so hopeful.

. . . this mutual admiration is lacking in part or whole in just too many cases. If this condition were isolated and purely individual reactions in a few places, there would be little point to these observations. Criticisms, subtle or otherwise, are too general to dismiss this impression of misunderstanding.³⁴

Writers in the field of social work recognize the fact that the parish priest has not been sufficiently recognized by the agency. Father Gill feels that there has not been optimal relationship between the two; that in most cases this relationship has not been even satisfactory.³⁵ He says that the parish priest is

³³ Markham, "Cooperative Relationships," National Proceedings, 1942.

³⁴ Birmingham, "These Social Workers," The Priest, IV, 1948.

³⁵ Rev. Thomas Gill, "Religion and Social Work," Charities Review, XXXI, October, 1947.

generally conceded by the agency to be a resource and an important resource but, unfortunately, this resource is considered one which is accidental to the case and not an intrinsic part of the casework treatment.

This not uncommon underestimate of the potentialities of the priest in the service of families has all too often tended to widen the gap and impede the effective cooperation between the spiritual advisor on the one hand and the social worker . . . on the other.³⁶

When a parish priest, who knows his responsibility for the people of his parish, realizes that the agency worker fails to see his real relationship to those over whom he has charge, there is raised "a plausible question in his mind about the validity of objectives and methods which ignore such a conspicuously meaningful avenue of influence."³⁷

Miss Porter has been quoted above as saying" . . . we must assume the right of the parish priest to know . . . what we do."³⁸ But do we? In only one instance in the literature is a statement found answering in the affirmative. Sister Rosemary Markham states that the current agency practice includes notification of the pastor of services being given a parishoner. Sometimes a staff conference is held in which the priest is invited to participate and a mutual casework therapy is engaged in by priest

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Cf p. 8.

and social worker.³⁹ However, the other writers indicate that no such cooperation exists in other dioceses.

Miss Margaret Norman recognizes the fact that agencies initiate few referrals and contacts with the parish priests, but speaks with a less positive approach than other writers regarding the use of the parish priest.

No one would advocate an inflexible approach to religious problems, nor routinization in the use of the Church as a social resource. Even the policy of the Catholic agency, which may view its function as auxiliary to that of the pastoral ministry and which recognizes as primary the responsibility of the pastor for the particular people of a particular ecclesiastical territory, may be deviated from in the interest of the individual. But in order to avoid inflexibility, it is questioned whether the swing need be as negative as that of no contact, or as selective as that of the agency which thinks of the Church only when the client's conflict is religiously induced.⁴⁰

The following quotation indicates a challenge to the very existence of the central bureau.

Hardly more than a decade ago an unfortunate trend in Catholic Charities was observed which, happily, has been reversed in our day. Central bureaus of Catholic Charities were organized to which the poor of a parish were sent to get advice, food, clothing, medicine and other things necessary for life. This bureau became the agent of benefactions to the poor instead of the parish. The poor had reason to feel that they were unwanted members of the parish. They were cut off from what ought to be ever one of the principal sources of active parish life--the spirit of Christian Charity. Two factors, chiefly, contributed toward a reversal of the un-Catholic

³⁹ Markham, "Cooperative Relationships," National Proceedings, 1942.

⁴⁰ Margaret C. Norman, "Application of Catholic Philosophy to the Practice of Social Case Work," National Proceedings, 1937, 66.

trend. The first was the great economic crisis of the country which showed up the inefficiency and costliness of centralized charities; and the other was the phenomenal development of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, whose conferences are built upon parish foundations. Christ's poor became again what the Church has ever considered them, priceless treasures of the parish instead of unwelcome burdens of some centralized office of charity.⁴¹

This quotation serves two purposes: it points to a misunderstanding of the reason for the central bureau or the misuse of such a bureau; it also very clearly indicates the fact that the care of the poor is considered the parish obligation.

The literature indicates specific reasons why this state of affairs exists, viz., that the relative position of the priest and the agency is recognized and the failure of cooperation between the parish priest and the agency is admitted. There seem to be three focal points in this conflict: the agency with its lack of interpretation, the pastor with his lack of understanding of social work and psychiatric problems, and the worker with her lack of maturity.

Agency's Role in the Conflict

The fact that the parish pastor lacks an understanding of diocesan social work is very often a consequence of failure to interpret by the agency. Father Gill thinks that a knowledge of the resources in a community, even in a general way, should be known by the parish priests. He feels that the agency should sup-

⁴¹ Most Rev. Aloisius J. Muench, "Catholic Charities and Parochial Life," National Proceedings, 1936.

ply this knowledge.

Incidentally, is it not a little unrealistic to expect even general concepts of the social and psychiatric resources of the community to diffuse themselves? When we say the priest should know the major programs of assistance and have some idea regarding access to them we do not deliver the agency from their responsibility of getting such information to him. It seems fairly evident that the public information effort of any service should begin with the most likely sources of referral. If our observations regarding the Catholic priest's position in his community are valid, then his lack of awareness of social services in his community implies some failure of the agencies' interpretation program.⁴²

The agency has a responsibility in this matter, Margaret Porter says.

He refers to us a large number, probably the majority, of our clients. He serves on our committees and helps to form our agency policies. Assuredly it is our responsibility to interpret our work to him as clearly as possible, with the hope of making him even a closer part of it.⁴³

Miss Porter feels the agency should present the interpretation in time to prevent the misunderstanding.

'Well, then, what do you do, if you don't give Catholics money when they need it?' When faced with this controversial question, we must remember, first of all, with suitable understanding, that it was our job to let that particular priest know our true function, not his to find out.⁴⁴

She considers interpretation of the social work program as administrative responsibility.

XXXI. 42 Gill, "Religion and Social Work," Charities Review,

32. 43 Porter, "Our First Public," Charities Review, XXXIV,

44 Ibid.

It may be noted that a good interpretation program is primarily an administrative responsibility of the agency. Responsibility for it cannot be left solely with individual caseworkers who may lack time or special aptitude for interpretation. The whole staff may well be made "interpretation conscious" but it is the writer's opinion that a good program must be the responsibility of a specific staff member or department aware of casework practices and skilled in publicity techniques.⁴⁵

Besides this failure to interpret, the agency has also failed to make full use of the pastor in the actual social work. This is aside from his right to be conferred with regarding his parishoners. Father Gill thinks that the use of the parish priest would enable the agency worker to form a clearer diagnostic picture of the clients' problems.

We suggest simply that a skillful and full drawing upon the resource of the priest's knowledge by the psychiatrist or caseworker promises to increase measurably the scope and depth of diagnostic material available for the treatment of the Catholic family's problems.⁴⁶

He states why some workers have failed to make use of this important resource.

Some practioners have hesitated to avail themselves of the assistance of this truly valuable ally In some instances I fear, it connotes a simple ignorance of the significance of the religious-moral factors in family life; in others, a series of prejudicial assumptions, on one or several sides of the partnership.⁴⁷

45 Porter, "Our First Public," Charities Review, XXXIV.

46 Gill, "Religion and Social Work," Charities Review,
XXI.

47, Ibid.

In the same article the author refers to one secular family agency which was vainly attempting to save a marriage of a Catholic couple using the clients' religious tenets to give support to her casework. A marriage out of the Church was causing the marital discord. "A five minute discussion with the family's pastor would have corrected that disoriented diagnosis."⁴⁸

Father John Kelley considers the pastor a gold mine to be used in many ways in social work. He states that the pastor can give the worker information regarding his families that no investigations could ever reveal.

He can open up to her all the facilities of his entire parish that will provide for the religious education and the spiritual follow-up of her charges. Through the pulpit, he can arouse the interest of his congregation and enlist their assistance in such a way that purse strings will be loosened and doors of homes will be thrown open to welcome in the many little souls who by their very nature crave a place at the normal family hearthstone.⁴⁹

Regarding the "public relations" of the agency with the pastor there seems to be a lack of careful handling of the parish pastor by the agency. Msgr. O'Grady recognizes the fact that disagreement often occurs when an agency refuses to accept a child for placement. He states that this situation is being alleviated but fails to state where this optimal situation exists.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Kelley, "What Can the Worker Expect," National Proceedings, 1933.

More and more, however, this matter has become a matter for discussion between the pastor and the Catholic Charities and the parents. It is usually a three-cornered discussion in which a conclusion is reached on the basis of the needs of the children and how far placement serves these needs.⁵⁰

Father Gill feels that a more careful reception could be given a pastor who takes the trouble to refer a parishoner to the agency. He meets with such passive acceptance that he is convinced that the worker manifests complete indifference because of an outside referral.

Social agencies particularly might do well to reexamine their practice in assisting or accepting such referrals. Unfortunately, one sometimes does hear of instances in which inquiries by interested parties about help to clients are met so passively as to suggest complete indifference to any function other than the agency's own.⁵¹

Besides efficiency in the handling of referrals from the priests, a more professional handling of referrals to the priests is needed.

Caseworkers, Catholic and non-Catholic, need to look for ways of developing better referral techniques and consultative services for clients in need of help with moral and religious problems. Tremendous strides have been made in developing methods of referral and consultation with psychiatrists, home economists, lawyers, etc. There is no reason why social workers and priests should not work out agency-parish relationships to a highly refined degree.⁵²

⁵⁰ O'Grady, "The Parish and Its Social Problems," National Proceedings, 1950, 231.

⁵¹ Gill, "Religion and Social Work," Charities Review, XXXI.

⁵² Rev. John Harrington, "Catholic Social Worker and the Moral Problem," Caritas, May, 1951.

Several writers have been quoted indicating that the agency has failed in its responsibility of interpreting its position and its work to the parish priest; that the agency has not realized the help a pastor could give; that a more careful handling of referrals is needed. Margaret Porter presents some definite suggestions as to the clearing up of these simple elements of the conflict. She advocates talks to seminarians, visits to priests in rectories, prompt reporting back on cases referred by him, a regularly issued news letter, and the use of the diocesan newspaper. "The matter of reporting back without fail on all referrals is the most obvious, the simplest and perhaps the most neglected of all interpretative methods."⁵³

Pastor's Role in the Conflict

The failure of some pastors to understand social work seems to have two focal points in the literature: one is the personality of these pastors, the other is the lack of training in this particular field.

I. The Pastor's Personality.

Father Gill feels that sometimes the parish priest is at fault when cooperation does not exist between the pastor and the social worker.

I do not wish to imply that in all instances cooperation is defeated by the attitude of the social worker or psychiatrist.

⁵³ Porter, "Our First Public - the Parish Priest," Charities Review, XXXIV.

Sometimes it is the parish priest who is the source of the resistance. At any rate, I believe we should get about remedying this costly situation.⁵⁴

In an article printed in The Priest entitled, "Could Father Be a Problem?" Nelson W. Logal asserts that "Father is often quite a problem." Although there is no direct connection with social work, it can easily be seen, by substituting social work and worker, for teaching and Sister, that the pastor's personality must be considered by "fellow workers in the vineyard of the Lord."

When Robert Burns wished for the gift to see ourselves as others see us, he really asked for something.

While teaching a course in the Philosophy and Psychology of Religious Instruction to a group of nuns for the Master's degree, I experienced the full impact of Burns' poetic desire most unexpectedly. An innocent sounding topic had been assigned for class work. It was labelled, "A Problem in Teaching Religion." Even a rapid summer's reading of the reports convinced one that Father is often quite a problem to teaching nuns.

The papers were sincerely written. The language was respectful. Sighs took the place of carping criticism. Due allowances were made for Father's many cares. But a central fact emerged: Father is often quite a problem! . . . The impression of sincere, competent, fellow-workers in the vineyard of Catholic Education may stimulate us to improve our public relations with the Sisters who teach in our parochial schools.

. Father's random instructions follow no pattern. . . . When asked to interview the parents of a problem-child, Father shrugs and replies, with a knowing smile, "What can you do with people?" When asked to assist with a disciplinary problem, Father sternly reminds Sister that she would be able to handle it if she were a good teacher. . . . Father refuses to speak civilly to the teachers. In teacher-parent conflicts,

XXXI. 54 Gill, "Religion and Social Work," Charities Review,

Father always stands directly behind the parents.⁵⁵

There is one other quotation which refers to the personality of the pastor. It might also be placed under the suggestions of remedies for the solution of the problem of conflict between the agency worker and pastor. Workers could use it as the first step in realizing the need of applying their knowledge of the casework approach to the pastoral personality as they would to any other. Most Rev. Paul P. Rhode, Bishop of Green Bay, when addressing a class of newly ordained priests, offered them this advice on making an adjustment to the personality of their new pastors:

Pastors must be studied: some are brothers; some conceited bosses; some are generous; some are stingy; some welcome initiative; some are jealous. Regulate yourself accordingly.⁵⁶

II. Pastor's Lack of Training in Social Work Field

In studying the literature of this period several references are found stating the need for the pastor to understand and accept the systematized organization of social work. Some of the writers think that this acceptance is needed by the pastor if a better relationship and cooperation is going to exist between the agency and the parish.

Margaret Porter says that "for a more useful relation-

⁵⁵ Nelson W. Logal, "Could Father Be a Problem?" The Priest, VII, November, 1950, 828.

⁵⁶ L. D. Scanlan, "Bishop Rhode's Fourteen Points," The Priest, I, July, 1945, 45.

ship . . . the parish priest must be able to recognize that case-work is a special, learned skill with special services to offer."⁵⁷ Father John Kelley says that "for a workable understanding . . . the pastor's favorable acceptance of the present day system of social work . . ." is needed.⁵⁸ Father Thomas Gill states that there should be more kindly support, the closest and most sympathetic collaboration and that the priest must be able to appreciate the contribution of the social worker.⁵⁹

None of these writers quoted state or infer how this is to be done other than through the interpretation of social work by the agency.

When we come to the mental hygiene problems of social work, there is found a definite request for education of the clergy in this field by Father Thomas Verner Moore. He is asking for the understanding and realization by the clergy of the need for guidance clinics for children.

I feel the day is coming and will not be long delayed when the education of our clergy will introduce them to the modern problems of the mind and with the general appreciation of what can be done it will finally be done, and the Catholic Clinic supported by organized social service will be taken as

⁵⁷ Porter, "Our First Public - the Parish Priest," Charities Review, XXXIV.

⁵⁸ Kelley, "What Can the Worker Expect," National Proceedings, 1933.

⁵⁹ Gill, "Religion and Social Work," Charities Review, XXXI.

a matter of course in every diocese in the land.⁶⁰

References are seen in the literature indicating a lack of understanding of psychiatric problems involved in this field of social work, the guidance of the young. Father Verner Moore infers that the pastor's lack of understanding is taken for granted in the field of delinquency and child guidance.

What happens at times when a more or less serious problem of juvenile delinquency comes up for discussion and someone suggests: 'take the boy to the Pastor?' One hears the reply: 'what does he know about it?'⁶¹

He asserts that problems of mental hygiene include much that is neither insanity nor feeble-mindedness. Children lie, steal, commit sex offences, truant, disobey and are incorrigible all around. These are all forms of delinquency and differ only in the frequency with which they are committed. Children seldom show any signs of insanity as such.⁶²

Have the members of the clergy anything to do with mental hygiene? The question had better be put in the light of the nature of problems that come to a mental clinic for treatment: Has the clergy anything to do with the prevention of delinquency?

What are the members of the clergy actually doing to treat the problems of delinquency in a really efficient manner? Unfortunately, they are not doing nearly as much as they can and should.⁶³

⁶⁰ Rev. T. V. Moore, "Mental Hygiene and the Pastoral Ministry," National Proceedings, 1931, 168.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

The too frequent complaints in the literature regarding expulsion from parochial schools indicate the lack of understanding of the dynamics of behavior by those in charge of the schools. Father Moore asks if expulsion is the main remedy when children in a Catholic school are reported to the pastor for delinquency. He asks what is the duty of the parish to the child after expulsion.

Will He who was accused of associating with publicans and sinners hold that pastor guiltless who washes his hands of the delinquent child? . . . (does) the bishop or clergy of a diocese fulfill the duty of the Church to delinquents by simply sending all Catholic delinquent children to the state or city clinic for diagnosis and a plan of treatment? . . . that it should be accepted as a permanent and universal policy of the Catholic Church is to me inconceivable.⁶⁴

Sister Isabelle, O.S.B., quotes a pastor, "We have no problem children in our school. If they don't behave themselves, we put them out." The significance of the social history of childhood in the actions of the adult offender is not realized. In this article Sister Isabelle states the need of having someone on the school staff trained in mental hygiene and social work so that the child may be studied as an individual.⁶⁵

One wonders if the strength of the resource of parochial school training in the prevention of crime is fully understood. A former police commissioner of New York City referring to the delinquent says

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Sister Isabelle, O.S.B., "The Role of the School in Individual Adjustment," National Proceedings, 1937.

I have seen the mature criminal almost disappear . . . I have seen his place taken by the youth who is impetuous and ruthless and who does not evidence any remorse. That irresponsibility, that lack of sense of the awful horror of crime has been one of the strangest developments that we in the police department have had to encounter.

complete lack of religious and parental control with environment playing quite a part.

I do know that if we are ever going to correct this condition we must look at the root, and the root is to take hold of the boy before he comes to the delinquent stage and keep him out of the courts and out of the hands of the police.⁶⁶

The aim of this thesis is not to build up an argument that a different attitude is needed in the parish regarding this problem of child guidance. What has been said is being repeated, that is all. Most of the literature has presented a negative picture regarding this attitude. Only three articles were found which presented a picture wherein the parish priest showed an understanding attitude towards this problem.⁶⁷ Two of these writers who show this ideal attitude to an understanding of social work problems by pastors are themselves associate directors of Catholic Charity agencies. One of these writers presents the picture of a parish priest who has ideal relations with the social agency. When a family is referred to such a priest, "he calls on them: the house

66 Edward P. Mulrooney, "Address," National Proceedings, 1937.

67 Aileen Groos, "Social Work and the Pastoral Ministry," National Proceedings, 1946. Rev. William J. Daly, "Problems the Child Brings to School," National Proceedings, 1947. Charles E. Bermingham, "Try the Parish," The Priest, V, September, 1949, 672.

is dirty, he expects it; he is not welcome, he does not care."

Being a philosopher, he remembers that what are objectively the strongest and most important reasons are sometimes psychologically the weakest He has just one thing to sell at this time--a human sympathy for human needs. When he has built that bridge, he knows that he can eventually bring over it those spiritual helps so badly required by this family.⁶⁸

Father Charles Bermingham would like to see all priests manifest this understanding. He infers that the only way it is going to be acquired is through seminary training. He says that the way in which many priests handle problematic behavior is a "laissez-faire, rule of thumb, and hit and miss procedure." He wonders, in the person of the social worker, if there is anything in pastoral theology regarding the handling of such problems akin to the techniques found among social workers, techniques which have been found effective.

Social workers wonder a little whether there is some kind of methodology in pastoral casework. They wonder if parish priests are in possession of one or several ways which experience and sound practice have indicated as acceptable and effective in dealing with certain problems. The social worker is trained to approach the problem and work to its solution in an orderly fashion. While the art of making people over or influencing them to accept correct standards and solutions cannot be reduced to a tight science, there are ways of going about the job which have proven sound and effective. Social Work has some commonly accepted principles and techniques in carrying out the process of human relations and human engineering. The social worker may wonder at times what an authoritative outline looks like in that science which somebody has told her is called Pastoral Theology. It sounds scientific, but even allowing for individual differences of

68 Bermingham, "Try the Parish," The Priest, V, 673.

application, it is difficult to perceive a commonly accepted and systematic practice of this high sounding science.

The question is whether pastoral casework in a number of instances is a laissez-faire, rule of thumb, and hit and miss procedure.

Perhaps there is some basis for the social worker's desire for a better understanding and interpretation of the practice of pastoral theology. The physician, policeman, salesman, front-line soldier and many other walks of life have systematic ways of going about their work, analyzing the problems, deciding the best method of approach and determining when to call in those outside of their field for cooperative assistance. They do not rely merely on personal ingenuity and prudence although every method ultimately rests on these individual factors for optimum success. The social worker can read a book or learn at a lecture what these other professions or occupations consider their competent field of work and the ways found best to carry out its practice. The social worker knows that Canon Law and the liturgical rubrics do standardize quite rigidly certain of the priests' activities. But when it comes to the application and the practice of the care of souls . . . there seems to be a wide latitude to put it mildly!⁶⁹

Father Bermingham describes the confusion caused the worker when working with Father X and Father Y. Father X demands that the social worker realize that the problems involved are moral problems and that they should be kept under the direct control of the pastor. Father Y, when interviewed concerning similar problems, claims that such problems are the work of the social worker and that, consequently, he cannot attend to such problems.

(The worker) is slightly confused if she meets Fathers X and Y on the same day. She wonders how many schools of pastoral theology are extant and whether books in English will explain policies and practices of those schools which the priests in her district are following. She excludes entirely from her mind the possibility that there may be arbitrary dictums in the science and practice of pastoral theology in

our great Church.⁷⁰

Father Bermingham considers training in this field necessary.

I will pray that my successors will have the advantage not only of excellent courses in Moral, Dogma, Canon Law and Scripture, but likewise, an equally excellent seminary course in the practice of pastoral theology or whatever it should be called.⁷¹

Worker's Role in the Conflict

The first hand expression of the pastor's opinion on social work is not found in the literature. What one does find is a rephrasing by writers of what has been said by priests in conversation. Since the worker is often the only tangible contact which the pastor has with the agency, it is the worker on whom most of the irritability is focused. Father Bermingham, although a staunch supporter of the agency worker, feels that much of the criticism is justified. He feels that the priest in the agencies in charge of such workers should do something about it.

If they are going to place at the service of the parish priest these "trained nurses" of the mission of Charity, these workers must be adequate to the kinds of jobs for which they are presumed to be qualified. If we are going to parallel non-sectarian agencies in dealing with involved family and personality problems, workers must be selected who are qualified for this task.⁷²

Father Bermingham states that more care should be taken

71 Ibid.

72 Rev. Charles E. Bermingham, "These Social Workers," The Priest, IV, December, 1948, 933.

in the selection of social workers.

We comment on a few perfectible elements which would aid those professionally participating in the Apostolate of Charity to be more useful and acceptable to their priestly superiors and cooperators.

There should be a better selection. This applies to the colleges, Catholic Schools of Social Work, and the Directors of Charity. Qualities of motivation, intelligence, and personality should be set at a higher level. Jet pilots, FBI agents, and tire salesmen are carefully screened for qualities of intellect and personality. They are important people. See what they get paid! They deal with expensive machines, bank robbers, and sales executives. The job of working for the temporal and eternal welfare of children, of families, and the community deserves at least a similar rating. From some talk in college halls or rectories, it seems that any Caspar or Mary Milquetoast can be a social worker or for that matter a teacher. These only serve to build or deform the less glamorous side of life--kids and people.⁷³

Besides this screening of students and workers, the characteristics of workers which come in for the greatest criticism are their immaturity and their tactless display of professional knowledge.

If priests were asked for the two most reprehensible characteristics of social workers, I believe they would list above all: (a) Overbearing professionalism and (b) Personal immaturity.⁷⁴

Writers refer to the immaturity of agency workers in two areas: their lack of knowledge and their lack of a mature personality.

Worker's Lack of Knowledge

Several of the writers indicate that the schools of social work should take care of the lack of knowledge regarding the

73 Ibid, 934.

74 Ibid, 931.

workers' religion. Father Bermingham says that the school should see to it that it does not turn out social workers who are "half-baked, half-secularized, unsure of Christian social principles of family and individual living and mouthing phrases of neo-pagan sociologists and Freudian psychologists."⁷⁵

Father McKenney mentions the need of basic knowledge by the Worker. "To anyone who has been engaged in professional social work even a brief time it is evident that there is need on the part of the individual worker for practical knowledge of basic moral principles pertaining to moral questions."⁷⁶

Father Lauerman decries the widespread lack of knowledge of philosophy and doctrine found among graduates of Catholic schools of social work.⁷⁷ However, the study, made by questionnaire of a rather complicated form, might have failed to stimulate the workers to answer to the best of their ability. Some of the answers indicated such random and careless replies that it seems plausible to assume this lack of interest. His suggestions to offset this ignorance is a curriculum of study rather overwhelming, both in content and classroom clock hours.

Father Edward Puthier, suggests a course in Social Work and Religion which would enable the student to recognize a reli-

⁷⁵ Ibid, 934.

⁷⁶ McKenney, Moral Problems, 2.

⁷⁷ Rev. L. Lauerman, Catholic Education for Social Work, Washington, D.C., 1945.

gious problem in the same way that courses in medical information and psychiatric information help the worker identify problems in those fields.

(This course in Social Work and Religion) would discuss the contributions the Church has made to social progress; it would show the uses of religion in meeting such crises in life as death, sickness, separation; it would point out the relation between religion and mental hygiene; it would indicate the role religion can play in the solution of behavior problems; it would define for social workers the areas of moral responsibility and its relation to personal culpability; it would make them familiar with the Church Law on matrimony; the required elements of the marriage contract, the various impediments, questions of validation and separation and other canonical procedures.⁷⁸

One other quotation regarding education for social work is closely aligned to this thesis and should be included.

Since Charity and Christian social reform of the individual and society implies working with the local Catholic community, the parish, and its sacerdotal leaders, a realistic and methodical training of the Catholic social worker should be given with a view to this vital cooperation. Could it be possible that the lectures on family casework and community organization give scant or superficial attention to this basic operational unit of Catholic Charity and social life?⁷⁹

Worker's Personal Immaturity

The personal immaturity of social workers is brought to the fore by Father Charles Bermingham and is considered an important factor in the causing of the conflict.

At any rate, these caseworkers, the greater part of whom are young women, elicit by their appearance . . . and conversa-

⁷⁸ Rev. Edward Pouthier, S.J., "Philosophy of Catholic Social Work," National Proceedings, 1937.

⁷⁹ Bermingham, "These Social Workers," The Priest, IV, 934.

tion, a title which is both sympathetic and critical. They are "sweet young things" the pride of their parents and their school and the hope of the Church, but a little too unsophisticated for any real coping with problems submitted to them.⁸⁰

Father Bermingham feels that if these case workers had only to decide regarding assistance, or had to deal only with children or adolescents, "this observation of immaturity would be unwarranted."

However, today, family and children's agencies are dealing with what social workers call "involved" family problems. Some of these situations call for the most prudent kind of analysis and acute educational process involving basic moral, ascetical and psychological principles. Moreover, the people concerned are considerably older and sadly wiser in the ways of the world.⁸¹

He feels that both priests and clients find it hard to accept such youth as competent to deal with these problems.

Other writers, too, stress the need of qualifications within the worker if she is to be accepted by the parish priest as a co-worker in his pastoral ministry. In regard to the worker, herself, Father Kelley says

If the worker hopes for the assistance of the parish priest, then she, herself, must possess such qualifications as will merit it. In these days, we expect a great deal of our social workers. In regard to their training and professional ability, the very highest standards of efficiency are considered none too high for the nature of the work which they are doing. Since they are the representatives of a department of the Church's work, we feel that they should be equipped with a good practical knowledge of the teaching of their faith, particularly of those that are relative to their work. . . . We expect them to be possessed of personal virtues and quali-

932. 80 Bermingham, "These Social Workers," The Priest, IV,

81 Ibid, 933.

ties that will make and keep them worthy of the sacred trust they bear.⁸²

Overprofessionalism of the Worker

The other "reprehensible characteristic" of social workers which is said to cause annoyance to the parish pastor is the overprofessionalism found among agency workers. This overbearing professionalism is mentioned more than once when the worker's personality is discussed. It is particularly stressed in the criticism of social work terminology, which even the best writers in the social work field relegate to the "jargon" category.

There are some caseworkers who retreat behind a smoke screen of lingo incomprehensible to other people and behave as the initiates of an erudite cult, able to exist in a vacuum.⁸³

Father Bermingham says "jargon" and "red tape" are the two terms used by priests and by others when referring to social work.

The fault of the social worker in thrusting out jargon and red tape on the unprepared citizen is to be viewed with alarm. Let the tape, necessary as it may be, become as invisible as possible. Words borrowed from medicine and the stock phrases of the cult should be reduced to everyday English with a predominance of Anglo-Saxon roots.⁸⁴

Sister Victoria Francis feels that the profession has much work to clear up the misunderstanding caused by terminology.

⁸² Kelley, "What Can the Worker Expect," National Proceedings, 1933.

⁸³ Porter, "Our First Public," Charities Review, XXXIV.

⁸⁴ Bermingham, "These Social Workers," The Priest, IV, 931.

As yet we still have ahead of us a continued struggle to combat prejudice based on misunderstanding of terms. Though much headway has already been made, years of educational work will probably have to be carried on before this barrier of words is broken down.

Social workers have themselves intensified the problem by developing a whole new jargon of technical terms, many of which could be dispensed with entirely.

Every social worker, lay or religious, must learn to talk about social service in language everyone can understand. Until we do, there is little hope that our work will be understood.⁸⁵

Aside from the terminology, the "attitude" of the worker helps to heighten the irritation.

In not a few instances, the priest may be tempted to call in to question the very intention of the social worker. Appearances sometimes indicate that there is more interest in processes of investigations, case-recordings and applying rules and regulations of the high craft of social work rather than in sympathetically helping the individual or family. Even Catholic social workers representing Catholic Charities may seem to be oriented to a cold, impersonal "treatment" of the "case."⁸⁶

Another writer infers that the profession is unjustly criticized.

Coercion and humiliation of the unfortunate, lack of sympathy and understanding, "red tape" and statistics are some of the sins charged up in the public mind against professional social workers. Only those of us who have been social workers can fully realize how persistently the social work profession has labored to avoid these very faults which are even more anathema to the social worker than to the average citizen.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Sister Victoria Francis, "Responsibility of the Religious," National Proceedings, 1937, 146.

⁸⁶ Bermingham, "These Social Workers," The Priest, IV, 931.

⁸⁷ Sister Victoria Francis, "Responsibility of the Religious," National Proceedings, 1937.

Remedies for the resolving of the problem of the immaturity of the worker have been discussed above in the screening and training of them. Father Bermingham offers one more suggestion which he considers a necessary factor in improving the services of the Catholic agencies.

When a social worker enters a Catholic agency, she usually is under the direction of a priest. Many large dioceses have several priests in executive capacities. It would be interesting to ask these priestly specialists for an analysis of their jobs. High on the list of things they would have to do would be the raising of the budget, representation of the Bishop at board meetings. . . . But who trains, supervises and improves the worker in their job of carrying Christ to the depressed and confused? Miss Jones, a graduate of the State University School . . . an exemplary Catholic . . . But is the worker exposed to one who has a richer understanding of ascetical and moral teachings? Does she discuss the problems she is attempting to help with one who understands the place of Grace and the functions of parish life and the parish ministry in meeting these situations? . . . Priests assigned to the diocesan charity should directly train the social worker . . . he should help build a real working relationship between the parish clergy and the worker . . .

In cases where conflict arises, the priestly supervisor of these professional workers should enter the picture immediately. No social worker should be allowed to, much less have to, argue out a situation with a priest to the point of defiance. Both the social worker and the priest should have immediate access to one who can take up the matter on an "equal with equal" basis.⁸⁸

Attempts to Resolve the Conflict

The conflict between the social agency and the parish pastor exists and its existence is lamented by the agency directors. The literature has indicated where the social work leaders consider the conflict to be focused. However, only two attempts

⁸⁸ Bermingham, "These Social Worker," The Priest, IV.

are recorded in the literature where definite attempts were made to work through this problem. In the latter part of the 1940 decade, the CYO of Chicago endeavored to launch a program of interpretation and recognition of the need of early referral of problem children. Charles Leonard's article evinces frustration in his attempt to arouse sufficient interest in the child guidance clinic of the CYO.

About the same time a similar program was started in New York City under the guidance of the diocesan superintendent of schools. This experiment was held only six years ago and its aim was principally the same as that asked for in 1931 by Father T. Verner Moore, i.e., the establishment of youth guidance centers. The program "aimed to reach back into the fundamental unit of the parish" in order to catch the behavior in its incipient stages. The final result of this experiment was brighter and the interest more widespread than the one in Chicago although both agencies agreed that it was time consuming work. The New York study pointed out the need of the casework approach in other areas of the social work field.

Results suggested that for further approaches to the schools a very cautious and thorough preparation with the priests and principals was necessary to overcome any initial resistance and blocking.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ William J. O'Brien, "A Study in School-Agency Relationships," National Proceedings, 1946, 47.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter is the focal point of the thesis wherein the relationship of the parish pastor to social work has been discussed. The literature indicates that although the responsibility for the care of the poor still belongs to the parish, certain characteristics of American life have made the establishment of the central agency inevitable. Since the foundation of the central bureau, a conflict has existed between it and the parish pastor. The failure to recognize social work as a temporal tool in the attaining of eternal Charity seems to be the basis of the conflict. Social work as carried on in a Catholic agency should possess all the professional techniques, impregnated with Christian philosophy. A Catholic worker should always keep in mind the eternal adjustment of the client when handling his situational problem.

The writers quoted in this chapter state that the agency has been established to help the pastor in his ministry of souls and some indicate that he should be an integral part of the case-work treatment and that the subservient role of the worker to the pastor should be recognized. Although the writers state that this is the ideal to be achieved, they also state that this situation does not exist. The failure to achieve this ideal cooperation between the agency and the pastor seems to center around three points: the agency which has not interpreted its function to the parish pastor, the pastor who fails to understand social work and

psychiatric problems, and the worker who lacks maturity. The two attempts to alleviate this situation were both concentrated on the parish schools. Both were relative failures in their immediate goal, although they laid the foundation for future programs of co-operation.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of this thesis has been to ascertain what has been said in the literature of Catholic Social Work regarding the pastor and his relationship to social work. The principal sources were Catholic Charities Review and National Proceedings of Catholic Charities as issued between 1931 and 1951, and The Priest from 1944, when first published, through 1951. A few other social work articles and books, published within these years, were used and are noted in the footnotes.

The material found in the literature of this study falls under these general headings: A. the parish priest as pastor of souls; B. the pastor as head of parish activities; C. the conflict between the agency and the pastor.

The pertinent ideas under these headings are summarized briefly:

A. Parish Priest as Pastor of Souls

1. The obligation of the pastor towards his people

Canon Law definitely states that the pastor is the one responsible for the souls of all people living within the confines

of the territory assigned to him. Regarding the pastor's position, Canon Law stresses two characteristics: the pastorate should be permanent, such as the father over a family, and the relationship with his people should be on a personal basis. The writers quoted have stated the importance of the care of the poor and of the sick in the pastor's ministry of souls. The pastor also has the obligation of counseling and guidance even aside from the spiritual guidance of the confessional. Some priests, interested in moral guidance, fear they see indications that the parish priests are retaining only the sacramental power within the confessional and are handing over the moral guidance of their people to the non-sectarian clinics.

2. The privileges of the pastor's position

Because of his unique position of authority and confidence, the pastor holds a corresponding incomparable position from the social worker's point of view. He not only is able to start the initial movements of referral, but even has an obligation to make use of this privilege which is his. His acquaintance with his people makes the pastor an excellent source of knowledge of their personalities and environmental situations. Because of the privileged position as family confidante, the pastor should be used not as an extrinsic resource, but as an intrinsic part of casework treatment.

B. The Pastor as Head of Parish Activities

1. The pastor and social action

Parishes can be a powerful force in the bringing about of social reform and the consequent better living conditions of the people. The work of the priests in raising the morale of the people by their encouragement and leadership, was seen in the successful attempt at social reform in the "Back of the Yards" district in Chicago. Because of the leadership by the priests in this economic area of living, the people came to realize the spiritual help and strength which they could find in their closer participation in the life of the Church.

Housing is as necessary to Christian living as is sound economics and the pastor should realize and use his influence to further the low-rent housing program for his less privileged parishoners.

The encyclicals of the Popes have asked the pastors to go out to the working man and not expect him to approach first. Priests in social action work state that the pastors do not do this and, because they lack a sufficient knowledge of the personal life of their people, they hinder the progress of social action reform.

2. Parish school

The parochial school has great influence in crime prevention and the realization of this by the pastor and the agency would prevent much problematic behavior reaching the delinquent state. The philosophy of parochial school education is to corre-

late secular subjects with Christian Doctrine, thus focusing the importance of morals in human relationships and the ultimate goal of all human living.

3. Society of St. Vincent de Paul

The Vincentian program of home visiting, economic help and counseling is the main focus of social work within the parish. If it were developed along the proven successful line of professional social work, it would constitute such a force within the parish that the need of the multi-functional central agency would be questionable.

C. The Conflict Between the Agency and the Pastor

1. Establishment of the agency

The central diocesan agency has been made necessary by the shifting population within the parishes, by the need of special psychiatric help for maladjusted persons, and by the assuming by the government of financial support for the underprivileged. In order to meet these changes in modern living, the agencies were established, not with the intention of removing these problems from the responsible hands of the pastors but in order to help him meet an overwhelming administrative problem involving trained personnel and finances.

2. Charity vs Social Work

These two terms seem to be the basis of the conflict between the parish pastor and the agency. Priests, workers, and students are among those who claim that taking care of the poor

should be a work of Charity and that modern social work is an unfeeling, uninterested institution. When it is recognized by all concerned that Charity is an eternal goal and social work a temporal means of attaining that goal, then the basic causes of the conflict will disappear.

3. Catholic Social Work

The principles and techniques of the social work profession, impregnated by Catholic philosophy and religious principles constitute Catholic Social Work. There is no difference in the social goal of Catholic and non-Catholic agencies,--in all instances it should be better social adjustment. Because of affiliation with the Church, Catholic Social Work uses its services not as an end, but only as a means to attain the ultimate goal of union with God. A Catholic social worker must always bear in mind that her client is destined for immortality and should so exercise her duties as to aid rather than hinder the workings of God's grace in the soul of the client.

4. Ideal relationship between the agency and the pastor

All the writers of the literature in this study, when referring to the relative positions of the pastor and the agency, stress the fact that the agency has been set up to aid the pastor in his ministry. The diocesan bureau is expected to handle those problems for which the parish priest has not the resources, either in time, training, or finances. The relationship of the worker to the pastor should be that of a helper and in cases of religious

counseling, she should work under his trained guidance.

5. Actual relationship between the agency and the pastor

The relationship as it exists falls far short of the ideal. It is considered by some agency priests to be even unsatisfactory. Writers claim that the potentialities of the pastor in casework treatment are underestimated. Only one instance in the literature indicates that the agency even bothered to let the pastor know that his parishoners were receiving services. One writer, inimical to central agencies, claims that to send a parishoner to the central bureau is an indication that he is unwanted by the parish.

6. Agency's role

Much of the misunderstanding is caused by the failure of the agency to interpret its program to the pastors. The literature also indicates that the agency fails to make full use of the pastor in conferring with him and using his resources. More careful handling of referrals and reception of the pastor in his agency contacts is needed; a more professional referral technique to the pastor is asked for. The agency could offset its failure by arousing an interest in its work by talks to seminarians, visits to rectories, publicity, and the recommended "reporting back on referrals" which the pastor has made.

7. Pastor's role

In considering the pastor's role in the conflict, the pastor's personality comes into focus. It is considered by some

writers that the pastor's personality could be a cause of friction and conflict. The pastor's lack of training in the social work field is another cause of the conflict. He is, generally, not understanding of, nor accepting of, the agency. One writer states that he is considered, too often, by those in charge of delinquent children as not having sufficient knowledge or training to handle the situation; his too frequent expulsion of the delinquent child from the parochial schools indicates lack of fundamental study in the dynamics of human behavior. Who is going to be responsible for the delinquent child when the pastor washes his hands of him? Incorporation of casework training as an intrinsic part of the pastoral theology course in the seminary is asked for by priests working in the field--training in the art of handling an individual person according to ways which have proven sound and effective.

8. Worker's role

The agency worker comes in for much of the criticism leveled against the agency by the pastor. The priest writers feel that much of it is justified and suggest that more care be taken in the selection of students and workers by the schools and by the agencies. Priests connected with social work decry the lack of fundamental knowledge of religious and moral principles among the workers. They feel that a course in religion as related to social work would remedy the situation. Another writer suggests that a study of the parish be included in the Community Organization course. Pastors and clients both feel that they could have more

confidence in the competence of the workers if their youth and immaturity were not so generally apparent. The worker is also criticized because of her overprofessionalism. Writers feel that this is particularly apparent in her unnecessary display of professional terminology and her attitude of detached interest in the processes of the work. Because of the irritation caused by the terminology and attitude of the worker, many pastors refer to social work as "jargon" and "red tape."

In order to offset this immaturity of the worker, it is suggested that the priests in the agency work more closely with the workers. Because of their specialized training in moral theology, their knowledge of the workings of the parish, and their personal acquaintance with many of the pastors, the agency priests should be more accessible to the workers who might want to confer with them on their problems.

9. Attempts to resolve the conflict

Only two attempts were found in the literature indicating attempts to end the conflict. Both of these were made by diocesan agencies and aimed at the reaching of the problem child back in the parish before a pattern of delinquency was set. They were relative failures even though attempted as late as the latter part of the 1940 decade. Both organizers claimed it was up-hill work to arouse sufficient interest in the schools and the parishes. However, they laid the foundation for similar work in the future.

This study presents the situation as seen in social work

literature. There are some verbal indications in the social work field of attempts by the larger archdiocesan agencies to do better interpretation than is indicated in this thesis. However, it might be well to emphasize the fact that several of these articles decrying the present situation have been written by priests connected with diocesan agencies and were published during the latter part of this study. Particular reference is made to a few of these agency writers.

Rev. Charles Bermingham who, while connected with the social agency in the diocese of Brooklyn, published the articles "These Social Workers" and "Try the Parish" in 1948 and 1949 respectively. At this recent date he felt the "criticisms, subtle or otherwise, are too general to dismiss this impression of misunderstanding." At that time he also was asking for closer guidance of the casework staff by the agency priests so as to ensure their acceptance as competent workers by the pastors.

In 1951, Rev. John Harrington, of the New York City agency was saying that caseworkers needed to develop better referral techniques when contacting parish priests. His statement, "There is no reason why social workers and priests should not work out agency-parish relationships to a highly refined degree" would indicate that he thinks there is much room for improvement.

Rev. Thomas Gill, connected with the Seattle diocesan agency, felt in 1947 that the lack of cooperation was a "costly situation."

Margaret Porter in 1950 was making definite suggestions to better the relationship and felt that the agency's failure to report back on referrals from the pastors "is the most obvious, the simplest, and perhaps the most neglected of all interpretative methods."

This study might indicate that one of the most important relationships for the future growth and strengthening of Catholic Social Work is that one between the agency and the pastor. If this is so, we must regret the dirth of current literature in this area. It seems safe to assume that the periodical, Catholic Charities Review, especially because of its connection with the St. Vincent de Paul program, and because of its being a monthly publication, would more likely be received in the parish rectories than would the annually published Proceedings of the National Conferences of Catholic Charities. In comparing the frequency of the use made of these two organs for the dissemination of the current thinking in the field of parish-agency relationship, we find, over a period of twenty-one years, that twenty-six of the articles were published in the annual publication and only two were found in the monthly publication, Catholic Charities Review.

In closing, may it be restated, that the material presented is that found in the literature, and it is regretted that some of it has a negative connotation. If there be another side of the picture, it has not been published in Catholic social work literature. The need for the pastor to record his thinking re-

garding his connection with the diocesan agency persists.

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